

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: SOPN PDIP LE PLO

SUBJ: BEIRUT REACTION TO U.S. STATEMENT ON PALESTINIANS AT
GENEVA

1. SUMMARY: STATE DEPARTMENT STATEMENT ON NEED FOR PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION IN MIDDLE EAST PEACE-MAKING EFFORTS WAS LEAD ITEM IN BEIRUT MEDIA SEP 13, BUT RECEIVED LIMITED COMMENT. MOST PAPERS, RIGHTIST AND LEFTIST ALIKE, BANNERLINED "WASHINGTON: NO PEACE WITHOUT PARTICIPATION OF PALESTINIANS IN GENEVA." PALESTINIAN OFFICIAL COMMENT IS WHOLLY FAVORABLE AND PALESTINIAN PRESS COMMENT IS GENERALLY FAVORABLE WITH SOME RESERVATIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. MOST EXTENSIVE EDITORIAL COMMENT WAS FROM MICHAEL ABOU JAOUDE OF AN NAHAR, WHO DESCRIBED STATEMENT AS U.S. RECOGNITION OF BOTH ARABS AND PALESTINIANS, AND SAID "U.S. SPELLED WORD 'PALESTINIANS' AS IF IT SPELLED WORD 'ARABS.'" THE AMERICAN CALL FOR A PALESTINIAN PRESENCE AT GENEVA AND EVEN IN THE PEACE-MAKING PROCESS IS AN AMERICAN RECOGNITION, NOT ONLY OF THE PALESTINIANS, BUT ALSO OF ARAB WEIGHT, EVEN THOUGH
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THE PALESTINIAN PRESENCE WAS NOT RESTRICTED TO THE PLO. THE STATE DEPARTMENT STATEMENT, NEVERTHELESS, AS A HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT, IS A POINT OF CHANGE FROM THE ISRAELI COURSE IN U.S. POLICY. THIS WILL HAVE ITS WEIGHT ON PALESTINIAN DECISIONS, FIRST IN SOUTH LEBANON, AND SECOND, AT THE (FORTHCOMING) CENTRAL COUNCIL MEETING IN DAMASCUS."

3. MODERATE "ARAB NEWS AGENCY," EDITED BY HARES CHEHAB, CHARACTERIZED STATEMENT AS "AN AMERICAN MASTER STROKE" AND REPORTED ARAB AND PALESTINIAN "WARM WELCOME FOR THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION'S STAND." STATEMENT "WAS SEEN AS DIRECTED AT ISRAEL WITH THE AIM OF MAKING IT UNDERSTOOD THAT THE TALKS SHOULD BE HELD WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF AMERICA'S PROFESSED POLICY...THE BALL IS IN ISRAEL'S COURT -- SINCE THE JEWISH STATE HAS LOST FREEDOM OF MANEUVER AND BEEN PLACED BEFORE A FAIT ACCOMPLI." CHEHAB SAYS STATEMENT "IS TANTAMOUNT TO AN OPEN AND FORMAL AMERICAN RECOGNITION OF THE PALESTINIANS AND THEIR ROLE IN A SETTLEMENT."

4. PRO-LIBYA AS SAFIR TOOK NEGATIVE PERSPECTIVE:
"THE U.S. HAS COMPLETELY EXCLUDED HOLDING A GENEVA CONFERENCE BECAUSE IT REALIZED THAT ISRAEL REJECTS PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION AT THE CONFERENCE IN ANY FORM. THE STATEMENT IS A CLEAR SIGN THAT THE U.S. HAS OPTED FOR NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN ARAB AND ISRAELI FOMINISTERS IN NEW YORK IN LIEU OF GENEVA."

5. PALESTINIAN REACTION. IKE, CITING AFP FROM PARIS, QUOTED PLO SOURCE DESCRIBING STATEMENT AS "VERY ENCOURAGING" AND ONE MORE STEP TOWARDS BEGINNING OF DIRECT U.S.-PLO TALKS. HOWEVER, "MIDDLE EAST REPORTER" LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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(EDITED BY RESPECTED PALESTINIAN JOURNALIST IHSAN HIJAZI) SAYS "UNOFFICIAL PALESTINIAN SOURCES" IN BEIRUT REACTED TO STATEMENT WITH SKEPTICISM: "THEY PARTICULARLY REFERRED TO THE FACT THAT (STATEMENT) DID NOT CLEARLY SAY THE PLO MUST BE REPRESENTED AT GENEVA," AND ADDED, "THE U.S. DID NOT EVEN PROMISE TO INVITE THE PLO TO GENEVA IF THE LATTER ACCEPTED RESOLUTION 242." THE "ARAB NEWS AGENCY" CARRIED SIMILAR REPORTS. ADDING HIS OWN COMMENT, HIJAZI THOUGHT U.S. WAS TRYING TO "BREAK THE DEADLOCK ABOUT RECONVENING THE GENEVA CONFERENCE," AND WAS WORRIED ABOUT STATUS OF MODERATE ARAB LEADERS, SUCH AS SADAT.

6. AUTHORITATIVE PALESTINIAN REACTION CAME IN STATEMENT BY YASSIR ARAFAT ISSUED BY FALASTINA AL THAURA MID-DAY SEP 13, AS FOLLOWS:

"THE STATEMENT, MADE BY THE OFFICIAL SPOKESMAN OF THE U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PALESTINIAN ROLE AND THE USELESSNESS OF ANY SETTLEMENT WITHOUT SOLVING THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM AND THE PARTICIPATION OF THE PALESTINIANS IN THE PEACE PROCESS

AS A CONDITION TO ITS SUCCESS, IS A POSITIVE STEP WHICH
CONFIRMS AN OBJECTIVE FACT, THAT THE PALESTINIAN
PROBLEM IS THE ESSENCE OF THE STRUGGLE IN THE MIDDLE
EAST AND IS A CONFIRMATION OF THE CORRECTNESS OF THE
POSITION TAKEN BY THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION,
REITERATED BY THE RECENT PALESTINIAN NATIONAL COUNCIL."

7. COMMENT: MODERATE LEBANESE REACTION TO STATEMENT
IS ENTHUSIASTIC. PALESTINIANS HAVE DELIBERATELY CHOSEN
TO LOOK AT WHAT STATEMENT DOES SAY AS SUPPORTIVE OF
THEIR POSITION AND TO IGNORE, AT LEAST OFFICIALLY, WHAT
IT DOES NOT SAY.

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